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Pa. Seeks Manheim Hazardous Waste Landfill Closing

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The state has tentatively decided to close a hazardous waste landfill at Raymark Inc. in Manheim because it is contaminating groundwater on site and cannot be properly lined.

It could cost the company "hundreds of thousands of dollars" to transport and dispose of the waste elsewhere, Dennis Weller, Raymark's manager of facilities engineering, said Tuesday.

But Raymark has no plans to appeal the ruling and is already looking into how to close the landfill, he said. Details have not been worked out yet. The state will have to approve any closure plans.

When new hazardous waste regulations were passed in 1980, companies were given "interim" approval to keep their landfills running while they applied for permanent permits and awaited rulings by the state and federal governments.

The state Department of Environmental Resources announced its "preliminary" decision to deny Raymark's application in a legal notice in Tuesday's newspapers.

"Monitoring well data shows the presence of contamination in the groundwater from the present landfill operation," the legal notice read.

That contamination does not appear to have moved off the Raymark property, said Robert Benveniste, DER's regional facilities supervisor.

Weller said the pollutant is not hazardous. Benveniste did not have test results available.

The company does not have monitoring wells off site but sampling at wells within the Raymark tract shows the contamination

other places very nearby on the property," Weller said.

"There's no indication it has traveled any great distances. We haven't seen any influence on creek water" that is close to the landfill, he added.

DER rejected the application because it "does not propose installation of a double liner as required by the regulations," the legal notice explained.

But a liner cannot be installed at the site, Benveniste said.

Regulations require that a liner be at least 4 feet above the water table. The groundwater is close to the surface at Raymark, and it is not possible to get that 4-foot distance, Benveniste said.

The Raymark waste is a sludge that contains toxic levels of lead, the notice said. The sludge comes from dust collectors used in the manufacturing of auto clutch plates, brake shoes and related products.

The waste also contains products that failed to meet Raymark standards, Benveniste said.

Closure of the landfill will probably be phased in gradually because the plant might have to shut down if it were closed immediately, Benveniste said.

It may take some time to find another disposal site, Weller said.

"There are very few permitted (disposal) sites in the country and perhaps only one in the state to take hazardous waste," he added.

Written comments on DER's decision can be submitted to DER by the public by Dec. 20. Requests for a public hearing on the denial should also be filed by then.

Letters should be sent to the attention of Michael R. Steiner at DER's Bureau of Solid Waste Management, One Ararat Boulevard, Harrisburg, PA.